

Membership, Participation Makes a Difference

By: Daniel O'Leary, First Place Winner

Participation in the Air Force Services Club Membership program makes a difference for my family and me by providing us a sense of community, and by adding financial flexibility and convenience to our military lifestyle. Although I am an active duty United States Marine, I have been a member of the Air Force Services Club System since 1989. My experiences as a club member have continually improved through the years—a telling tribute to Air Force Services and their efforts toward continuous improvements!

Club membership provides a tremendous sense of community and partnership. I recall when my family moved to Okinawa, Japan, in December 1993. Transferring from Goodfellow Air Force Base, it was our first overseas assignment and our anxieties were rather high. My wife and I were concerned about funding adequate housing, transportation and living within a foreign culture, but our two children were most anxious about seeing Santa Claus during the holiday season! Within forty-eight hours of arriving in Japan, we headed for the Kadena NCO club to become members and enjoy a nice meal in a friendly atmosphere. How thrilled we were when we entered the club and were greeted by an announcement of the club's, "Member's Night with Santa Claus." We attended the special event held for club members, and our children were thrilled. We forged friendships at the club during that event that continue to this day. Suddenly, our move to a foreign country and a new community became drastically easier—thanks to participation in the Air Force Services Club Membership program.

Air Force Services Club Membership also makes a difference by providing financial flexibility and convenience for military families. Military families live within a higher degree of uncertainty than most Americans do. Many military families move every two or three years, are on call twenty-four hours a day and must be prepared to deploy on short notice to any and every climate and place. Every service and program that enhances the military lifestyle is greatly appreciated and welcomed. When the Air Force Services Club Membership program transitioned from local membership accounts to the worldwide-recognized First USA Card, I knew the program would improve our quality of life. Whether on base or off, the First USA Card provides me the flexibility, buying-power, and convenience my military life needs. From club membership dues, to club purchases, to worldwide travel, to access to cash at ATM machines, the First USA Card provides it all. The convenience of a single monthly account summary covering my diverse use of the card is immeasurable. There are far too many benefits of club membership through the First USA Card to list here, but they all measure up to one very valuable membership benefit: financial flexibility and convenience.

Community and convenience have made me a satisfied Air Force Services club member since 1989. Improving quality of life measures to attract and retain high-quality service members is an important strategy of the military services. The Air Force Services Club

Membership program goes a long way in increasing members' quality of life, and I can say without hesitation that participation does make a difference!

Essayist's Biographical Notes: Daniel O'Leary is currently a full-time student at the University of Maryland Asian Division, holding a 3.93 GPA. He will be pursuing a Masters degree in Science and Technology Management through the University of Maryland Graduate Studies Program.

Air Force Club Membership; What It's Really Worth

By: Amy Marie Griffin, Second Prize Winner

Membership: n. 1. the state of being a member 2. all the members of a group or organization 3. the number of members

That is how Webster defines membership. But what does it really mean, what is the real worth of being a member of a club or organization? To be "a distinct part of a whole" or "any of the persons constituting an organization or group." For members of Air Force Clubs world-wide it means so much more.

Throughout the world there are a variety of clubs and organizations that cater to a diverse realm of interests and needs. Some are purely social, some philanthropic, others fraternal or ethnic in nature. Air Force Clubs around the globe encompass all of these virtues and provide a safe haven for active duty personnel and their families.

Air Force Clubs fulfill a need and provide a great service to the base, its members, and the Air Force community. At each base they serve as the entertainment hub, providing quality and affordable food, beverages, and entertainment to military personnel and their guests. They strive to provide programs to satisfy a variety of tastes, age groups, and budgets. From Sunday brunches, family nights, lavish receptions, to wild promotion parties, there is something for everyone at the club.

As with many organizations and all aspects of the military, budget is always a major concern. For the nominal membership fee, club members get a lot of "bang for their buck"! There are very few other places in the world where you can enjoy food and beverages at such reasonable rates. Catering services are available, too. You can get expert advice, a reasonable rate, a wonderful atmosphere, and a beautiful setting.

Many clubs also become involved philanthropically in the local base and community. They provide opportunities for high school ROTC programs to use their facilities and give back to the base community through free membership nights, scholarships, "Welcome Home" receptions for deployed personnel, and support the work of the Spouses Club (OWC) or (NCWO), and many other activities.

Members worldwide take advantage of Air Force Clubs privileges such as check cashing and a competitive credit card rate. This a particularly valuable perk to active duty personnel who find themselves in foreign places on short notice with little or no cash.

Another unique aspect of club membership is its governing board. Comprised of active duty, retired, spouses, and club employees, they welcome anyone who wishes to attend the meetings to voice an opinion or suggestion for better operating their local club. Though most clubs provide the same services, each club has it's own personality and specialties that are reflective of the local base.

So, membership, what is it really worth? It is priceless. It means when you arrive at a new base you'll find good food, good fun, good friends, a place to relax, cash a check, share stories with others in similar situations, make new friends or maybe even run into an old one. As they say, "membership has its privileges", only Air Force Clubs come with open arms, a friendly smile and a sense of true belonging no matter where in the world you happen to be.

Essayist's Biographical Notes: Ms. Amy Marie Griffin is the daughter of Colonel Wendall L. Griffin, Langley AFB VA. Ms. Griffin is currently attending Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, with a career goal of being a pediatrician.

Air Force Club Membership; What It's Really Worth

By: Dawna Lei Grubbs, Third Prize Winner

The Air Force Club is nearly as indigenous as the uniform to this branch of the service. Military life would be incomplete without the club system. For decades, the Air Force club has provided a place to meet for social occasions, both formal and informal. The club is the place where military members forge personal relationships with each other and regale in stories of days gone past.

Within the walls of the clubs, many stories are told: most arouse laughter, others bring tears. These are the war stories that cannot be found in the history books. These are the stories of individuals who shaped the history of our nation and had worldwide impact. These are the stories of the courageous Americans who stood publicly to protect and promote freedoms we so often take for granted.

Along with the historical and cultural worth, the club has special value to me. Throughout my years as a military spouse, the club has remained the one constant of military life. The club has been there in every transition we have made. It served as a refuge during temporary duty assignments and the rigors of military life. It is one of the few places in our country where a military member is appreciated for their service.

The Air Force Clubs recognize the limitations of its members by providing value. The club provides good food at a great value, and they even remember such small details as

complimentary coffee. The club is the place I can take my family to have a good meal and be safe. The dues are also an immense value considering the benefits to members. I cannot place a price tag on the safety, camaraderie, and esteem the club affords its members. The thought of the club brings a smile to my face as I reminisce about the good times I have had with friends there. Those times can neither be duplicated nor given a market value. Those outside of our military society may not understand the importance of our club; but for those privileged to enjoy membership, the club is a vital aspect of the military life.

There is another unique feature of the club's presence in the Air Force life—it is always giving. So little is asked of us as members, yet the club gives so much to the entire military community. It gives through gifts, coupons, contests and sponsored activities. More than that, it is the place we celebrate our uniqueness as the Air Force.

There is no way to place a market value on club membership. The club is a part of the Air Force past and hopefully will continue into the future. Within its wall a history and a legacy is in the making.

Essayist's Biographical Notes: Ms. Dawna Lei Grubb is the wife of SSgt Toby Grubbs, Eielson AFB AK. Ms. Grubbs is currently attending Wayland Baptist University and working toward a degree which focuses both on Culinary Arts and Business.